

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BELGRADE 3406

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PASS TO DOD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MPOL MASS PFOR YO US UR

SUBJECT: DISCUSSION WITH GOY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

REF: A. BELGRADE 3280, B. USDAO BELGRADE 300650Z JUN 75

1. SUMMARY: IN CALL ON DEFENSE SECRETARY LJUBICIC, AMBASSADOR ASKED ABOUT PRESENCE OF SOVIETS IN YUGOSLAVIA REPORTED REFTELS AND NUMBER OF YUGOSLAVS UNDERGOING TRAINING IN SOVIET UNION. LJUBICIC ACKNOWLEDGED PRESENCE OF FEW SOVIET TECHNICIANS HERE TO ASSEMBLE AND DELIVER ARRIVING EQUIPMENT BUT EMPHASIZED THEY ARE NOT IN CONTACT WITH JNA OPERATIONAL UNITS. HE CITED ECONOMIC REASONS FOR KEEPING TIVAT SHIPYARD FULL REPAIRING SOVIET SHIPS, WHICH PERMITS CREW MEMBERS CONCERNED WITH REPAIRS TO REMAIN ASHORE, BUT OFFERED TO TAKE US SHIPS INSTEAD OF SOVIET. HE SAID AT NO TIME ARE THERE MORE THAN 100 YUGOSLAVS TRAINING IN SOVIET UNION. AMBASSADOR DENIED LJUBICIC'S SUGGESTION THAT US IS RELUCTANT TO SELL WEAPONS TO COMMUNIST GOY AND REITERATED STRONG US SUPPORT FOR YUGOSLAV INDEPENDENCE. LJUBICIC RESPONDED THAT SOVIETS SAY SAME THING, BUT CITED ACTIONS OF BOTH GREAT POWERS WHICH BELIE THEIR STATED INTENTIONS. HE SAID GOY WILL OBTAIN MODERN WEAPONS WHEREVER POSSIBLE, ADDING THAT A \$10 MILLION PURCHASE OF BRITISH ARMS IS IN OFFING. END SUMMARY.

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2. DURING THE FIRST CALL OF AMBASSADOR AND DATT ON DEFENSE SECRETARY GENERAL LJUBICIC THE DISCUSSION DEALT PRIMARILY WITH MILITARY TO MILITARY RELATIONS. BOTH AMBASSADOR AND GENERAL LJUBICIC EXPRESSED DESIRE TO ENHANCE RELATIONSHIPS. AMBASSADOR QUESTIONED LJUBICIC CONCERNING PRESENCE OF SOVIET TECHNICIANS IN YUGOSLAVIA. LJUBICIC FIRST RESPONDED THERE WERE NONE, BUT AFTER AMBASSADOR MENTIONED GENERAL POTOCAR'S CONVERSATION WITH DATT (REFTEL A), HE CONCEDED THERE WERE A FEW AT RECEIVING POINTS FOR ASSEMBLY AND DELIVERY OF SOVIET EQUIPMENT TO THE YUGOSLAVS. HOWEVER, HE EMPHASIZED, THERE WERE NONE IN OR CLOSE TO OPERATIONAL UNITS. HE WENT ON TO INDICATE THAT YUGOSLAVIA HAS PURCHASED THIS EQUIPMENT OUTRIGHT AND, AFTER DELIVERY, NO SOVIET INVOLVEMENT IS NECESSARY.

3. AMBASSADOR QUESTIONED LJUBICIC AS TO NUMBER OF YUGOSLAV OFFICERS AND NCOS TRAINING IN THE SOVIET UNION. LJUBICIC CLAIMED THAT AT NO TIME HAVE THERE BEEN MORE THAN 100 UNDERGOING TRAINING THERE.

4. AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT BY VIRTUE OF THE YUGOSLAV LAW ON THE REPAIR OF WARSHIPS AND ITS PRACTICAL APPLICATION (REFTEL B), THE SOVIETS SEEM TO BE MAINTAINING A PERMANENT NAVAL PRESENCE IN THE ADRIATIC. LJUBICIC EXPLAINED THE OPERATION OF THE YUGOSLAV LAW AND POINTED OUT THAT SOVIET SHIPS REPLACED THOSE IN PORT BECAUSE IT WAS ECONOMICALLY CONVENIENT FOR THE YUGOSLAVS TO KEEP THAT SHIPYARD FULL. ONLY CREW MEMBERS WHO ARE CONCERNED WITH TECHNICAL REPAIRS ARE ALLOWED TO REMAIN IN YUGOSLAVIA. IF THE US WANTED TO USE THE FACILITIES, GOY WOULD BE HAPPY TO SERVICE OUR SHIPS AND DURING THAT PERIOD KEEP THE SOVIETS OUT, HE SAID.

5. LJUBICIC ASKED AMBASSADOR DIRECTLY WHETHER US RELUCTANCE TO SELL WEAPONS TO YUGOSLAVIA STEMMED FROM US CONCERN ABOUT YUGOSLAVIA'S COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT. AMBASSADOR DENIED THIS. HE REMINDED LJUBICIC OF USG SUPPORT FOR YUGOSLAVIA SINCE 1952 BUT INDICATED PRESENCE OF SOVIET TECHNICIANS HEIGHTENED CONCERN OF USG THAT

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TRANSFER OF CLASSIFIED MATERIAL TO THE "EAST" MIGHT RESULT. LJUBICIC EMPHASIZED THAT WOULD, AND COULD, NEVER HAPPEN. THE YUGOSLAVS WERE ENTIRELY CAPABLE OF PROTECTING THE MEANS OF THEIR INDEPENDENCE. HE CHALLENGED THE AMBASSADOR AS TO KNOWLEDGE OF ANY TRANSFER OF CLASSIFIED EQUIPMENT TO THE EAST AND AMBASSADOR RESPONDED THAT SOME EQUIPMENT HAD BEEN TRANSFERRED BY ENTERPRISES. LJUBICIC EMPHASIZED THAT THAT WAS NOT

DONE BY THE MILITARY.

6. IN GENERAL DISCUSSION AMBASSADOR EXPRESSED USG STRONG SUPPORT FOR YUGOSLAV INDEPENDENCE. LJUBICIC RESPONDED THE SOVIETS SAY THE SAME THING; HOWEVER, HE NOTED THAT SOVIET PARTY ACTIVITY IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA (PRESUMABLY HUSAK'S CRACK-DOWN ON DUBCEK SUPPORTERS) AND BULGARIAN MEDDLING IN MACEDONIA BELIE SOVIET INTENTIONS. BY THE SAME TOKEN AMERICAN HOSPITALITY TOWARDS USTASHI SUPPORTERS AND FLEET EXERCISES WITH THE ITALIANS CAST DOUBTS ON USG COMMITMENTS FROM YUGOSLAV VANTAGE POINT. LJUBICIC'S EYES GLAZED AT AMBASSADOR'S DETAILED DISCUSSION OF AMERICAN CONSTITUTIONAL PROTECTION OF NON-VIOLENT CROATIAN SEPARATISTS.

7. LJUBICIC INDICATED THAT GOY WOULD SEEK MODERNIZATION OF THEIR ARMED FORCES FROM WHEREVER THEY COULD GET IT. THE WEST GERMANS WERE, ACCORDING TO LJUBICIC, EVEN MORE RELUCTANT THAN THE USG BUT HE PLANNED TO VISIT THE UK AS A GUEST OF THE BRITISH ARMED FORCES TO CONCLUDE A \$10 MILLION ARRANGEMENT FOR THE PURCHASE OF WEAPONS. HE ALSO INTENDED TO SEEK WEAPONS FROM THE FRENCH, SWedes AND WEST GERMANS.

8. COMMENT: LJUBICIC AT PAINS TO PUT THE US AND THE SOVIET UNION IN EQUAL POSITIONS AS UNTRUSTWORTHY SUPER POWERS BUT IN LIGHT OF SIGNIFICANT PURCHASE OF SOVIET ARMS, GOY APPEARS EVEN MORE ANXIOUS TO ACHIEVE BALANCE BY EQUIPMENT PURCHASES IN THE WEST.

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